

## 2026 Kansas Authors Club Literary Contest

*Contest opens April 1, 2026 and closes June 15, 2026*

**Submit online at [kansasauthorsclub.submittable.com](http://kansasauthorsclub.submittable.com)**

Theme contest pays \$50, \$25 and \$15, with two unpaid honorable mentions. All other categories will be awarded three places: \$25, \$15, and \$10, with two unpaid honorable mentions. Awards for Poet of the Year and Prose Writer of the Year will be selected by the contest chairs.

*Categories Note: There will be a variation in categories from year to year based on quantity of entries and input from judges and club members.*

### PROSE CATEGORIES

1. **Theme Contest:** “Writing Our History & Creating Our Future: Building Community Right” (fiction or nonfiction) Limit 1,500 words. May be written in any genre so long as it relates to the retreat theme. Demonstrates creativity in the form of new viewpoints, fresh writing techniques and captivating content.
2. **Humor:** (fiction or nonfiction) Limit 1,000 words. A story that produces amusement or laughter using any number of established or invented literary devices, styles and tones.
3. **Memoir or Inspirational:** (nonfiction) Limit 1,500 words. A story based on personal experience that tells of a significant experience in one's life. The piece evokes a special time, place and memory, and is told in literary rather than merely chronological fashion. The piece should demonstrate an intellectual, spiritual or emotional turning point.
4. **Flash Fiction:** Limit 500 words. A complete story in a much-abbreviated form, often told in vivid scenes. Usually involves three or fewer characters engaging in inner or outward conflict. Some aspects remain unspoken or imply a larger story. The ability to show, rather than merely tell, is one of the form's literary qualities.
5. **Stories Written for Young Readers:** Designate intended reader age at top right of manuscript as follows: preschool, early reader (5 to 7), middle grades (8-12), YA (14-19) (entry may be fiction or nonfiction) Limit 1,000 words. All genres, styles and storytelling techniques are allowed.
6. **Short Story:** (fiction) Limit 2,500 words. An invented narrative shorter than a novel but with a fully developed theme, usually including only a few characters involved in the plot. All genres with the exception of SciFi/Fantasy (see #7) are allowed.
7. **Genre Fiction: SciFi/Fantasy:** **NEW in 2026** (short fiction) Limit 2,500 words. An invented narrative shorter than a novel but with a fully developed theme, usually including only a few characters involved in the plot. This category is for science fiction and fantasy pieces only.
8. **First Chapter of a Book:** (fiction or nonfiction) Limit 2,000 words. Must be from an unpublished work, e.g., a manuscript or work-in-progress. Author may include a separate 500-word book synopsis.
9. **Rural Voices Category:** (fiction or nonfiction) Limit 1,500 words. Rural people and life are often stereotyped and overlooked in writing and other forms of media, but rural life is more complex and diverse than what is often portrayed. We want to change that with the addition of this category to our contest. Write a piece (fiction or nonfiction) that tells a story about rural living and that represents the many and diverse ways of being and living rural.

## **POETRY CATEGORIES** (limit poems to one page)

1. **Theme Contest:** The theme is "Writing Our History & Creating Our Future: Building Community Right." Any written poem that utilizes and expands this theme may enter. Classical and Japanese poems have specific forms, free verse and narrative poetry have a 40-line limit. Whimsy is limited to 20 lines. Please note the contest guidelines prohibit the same entry being entered in multiple categories.
2. **Classical Poetry:** Classic forms include, but are not limited to, sonnet, blank verse, and sestina.
3. **Free Verse:** Poems without a set rhyme or rhythm requirement. 40-line limit.
4. **Narrative Poetry:** Poems that tell a story. 40-line limit.
5. **Whimsy:** Light, humorous poetry, including limericks, shaped poems, and nonsense poems. 20-line limit.
6. **Japanese Poetry:** Japanese forms include haiku, tanka and renga.
7. **Ekphrastic Poetry:** Poems written in response to visual art. Each entry should relate to the artwork in some way, but the poem should not have to depend on the art to be understood. Limit 40 lines per poem. Include a photo of the artwork on the same document as the poem (it can be page 2 of the document). Do not submit the art as a separate entry. Include title and artist of artwork.
8. **New Poets:** A category for poets who are beginning to write poetry. Entries are limited to poets who have not previously won a top-three place in the KAC State Poetry Contest. All forms accepted; 40-line limit.
9. **Rural Voices Category:** *Any written poem that utilizes and expands this theme may enter. Follow line limits for above categories. Note that contest guidelines prohibit the same entry being entered in multiple categories.* Rural people and life are often stereotyped and overlooked in writing and other forms of media, but rural life is more complex and diverse than what is often portrayed. We want to change that with the addition of this category to our contest. Write a piece (fiction or nonfiction) that tells a story about rural living and that represents the many and diverse ways of being and living rural.

**GUIDELINES FOR ENTERING** (Please read and follow all instructions prior to submitting your entries to the contest. Entries that do not follow guidelines may be disqualified from the contest.)

1. This contest is open to non-member writers residing in Kansas and to all **current** members of the Kansas Authors Club, regardless of residence.
2. All entries must be original and not published in print or electronically in any format including web-based or individual blogs, websites or other electronic means, or publicly broadcast in any media before the 2026 state gathering in October.
3. Our goal is to promote personal creativity. We do not accept AI generated prose or poetry.
4. Entries that have won first, second, or third place in previous KAC State contests are not eligible to be entered again. District awards or Honorable Mentions in State Contests may be entered.
5. Each entrant may enter up to five entries per category. An entry may not be entered in multiple categories.
6. FEES: \$5.00 per entry for KAC members. \$8.00 per entry for non-members.

7. Judges will not be members of KAC. Prizes will be awarded only if judges find entries of sufficient merit. Judges' decisions are final. No correspondence will be entered into concerning manuscripts.
8. Entries will be accepted April 1 to June 15, 2026, via the online submission tool, *Submittable*. The direct link is [kansasauthorsclub.submittable.com](https://kansasauthorsclub.submittable.com). If you do not have access to a computer with internet, contact the contest manager for assistance.

### **INSTRUCTIONS FOR ENTERING PROSE AND POETRY CATEGORIES**

1. Prepare your document as you normally would for print submission. Submittable accepts the following file formats; doc, docx, pdf, rtf, wpf, odt, wpd.
  - a. Use a standard font (such as Times New Roman), 12-point size.
  - b. Prose documents should be double spaced with standard margins.
  - c. Your name, address, and other identifying information should NOT appear anywhere on the document.
2. Once your file is ready to submit, go to [kansasauthorsclub.submittable.com](https://kansasauthorsclub.submittable.com)
3. Scroll down to view all open contest categories. (They will not appear until the contest open date.) Within category of entry, select submit button.
4. Complete required information. (Name, address, etc.)
5. Select file and upload for submission.
6. Select fee category (member or non-member)
7. Provide payment details.
8. Save as a draft or submit.

### **Contacts for Contest Questions:**

#### **Prose Contest Manager**

Brenda White  
[Blwhite361@gmail.com](mailto:Blwhite361@gmail.com)

#### **Poetry Contest Manager**

Michelle Zumbrum  
[jake\\_randi\\_mom@yahoo.com](mailto:jake_randi_mom@yahoo.com)

Note: In addition to the awards of first, second, third place and honorable mentions within each prose and poetry category, an overall "Prose Writer of the Year" and "Poetry Writer of the Year" will be selected. This award is based on a points system assigned by placings. The contest managers will determine these winners, utilizing the three contest managers (adult prose, adult poetry, and youth) in the event of a tie or if consideration by a committee is deemed necessary.

Note: All prizes will be awarded to members and non-members at the annual KAC gathering in October. Prizes for winners who are unable to attend the convention will be delivered via district presidents or other KAC representatives and mailed when necessary.

For a list of the 2026 KAC Contest winners, check [kansasauthorsclub.org](https://kansasauthorsclub.org) after the October gathering.